

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

TO AMEMBASSY TUNIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EIND, BPRO, TS, HA

SUBJECT: EXPERIENCE OF US FIRM IN ESTABLISHING BLOOD
PROCESSING PLANT IN HAITI

REF: STATE A-9226; TUNIS A-145

1. THE EXPERIENCE OF OPERATING A BLOOD PROCESSING PLANT IN HAITI WAS NOT A HAPPY ONE FOR THE US COMPANY INVOLVED, FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF HAITI, OR FOR THE US GOVERNMENT. IN EMBASSY VIEW, ANY SUCH PROJECT WOULD REQUIRE THE WHOLE-HEARTED APPROVAL AND COOPERATION OF THE LOCAL MEDICAL PROFESSION IN ORDER TO AVOID COMPLICATIONS. THE HAITIAN MEDICAL PROFESSION WAS NOT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE OPERATION HERE. HISTORY OF OPERATION AND SUMMARY OF THE OPPOSING VIEWS OF THE PROJECT FOLLOW FOR EMBASSY TUNIS' BACKGROUND INFORMATION.

2. US FIRM HEMO CARIBBEAN AND GOH SIGNED CONTRACT SEPT. 1970 ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PLASMAPHERESIS CENTER IN HAITI. IN CONTRACT, COMPANY PROMISED TO GIVE VACCINATIONS TO DONORS WITHOUT COST, TO RETURN RED BLOOD CELLS EACH DONOR, TO OBSERVE INTERNATIONAL RULES OF HYGIENE, TO EXAMINE DONORS BY EITHER MEDICAL DOCTOR OR NURSE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF DOCTOR, ETC. IN DISCUSSING PROJECT, FIRM REPRESENTATIVES PRESENTED ARGUMENTS ALONG LINES USED BY NORTH AMERICAN

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BIOLOGICALS OF MIAMI AS REPORTED IN TUNIS A-145.

FIRST CENTER WAS OFFICIALLY OPENED MAY 1971 AND SECOND CENTER IN JUNE 1972.

3. SOME LOCAL CRITICISM, PARTICULARLY FROM MEDICAL PROFESSION, WAS EVIDENT FROM START OF PROJECT. IN JANUARY 1972, ARTICLES CRITICAL OF THE OPERATION BEGAN TO APPEAR IN US PRESS, INCLUDING NEW YORK TIMES. DESPITE GROWING CRITICISM, NO ACTION WAS TAKEN BY THE GOH UNTIL THE MINISTER WHO HAD INITIATED AND STRONGLY SUPPORTED THE PROJECT FELL FROM POWER. THE CENTER WAS CLOSED THE DAY FOLLOWING HIS DISMISSAL. A WEEK LATER THE GOH OFFICIALLY REVOKED THE CONCESSION STATING THAT THE COMPANY HAD "NOT ACHIEVED THE GOALS FOR WHICH IT HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED".

4. ALTHOUGH REPORTEDLY A MEDICAL INQUIRY COMMISSION HAD EXAMINED THE OPERATION AND HAD ISSUED A CRITICAL REPORT IN DECEMBER 1972, THE GOH DID NOT PUBLISH THE REPORT NOR MAKE IT AVAILABLE TO THE EMBASSY OR THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE UNTIL JUNE 1973. MEANWHILE US COMPANY STATED THAT IT HAD FULFILLED THE GOALS FOR WHICH IT WAS ESTABLISHED, THAT IT WAS PROVIDING A USEFUL SERVICE TO THE HAITIAN GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE, AND THAT THERE WAS NO REASON FOR REVOCATION OF THE CONTRACT. IN AN EFFORT TO OBTAIN PERMISSION TO REOPEN THE CENTERS, THE US COMPANY HIRED LAWYERS AND CONSULTANTS AND REQUESTED THE HELP OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE. DURING THE DISCUSSIONS, WHICH CONTINUED FOR ABOUT SIX MONTHS, THE COMPANY OFFERED ADDITIONAL BENEFITS TO THE GOH, INCLUDING A DONATION OF \$100,000 A YEAR FROM PROFITS FOR A CHARITABLE FOUNDATION TO BE ESTABLISHED TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH ON IMMUNOLOGICAL AND DISEASE PROBLEMS PECULIAR TO HAITI, THE PROVISION OF FRACTIONATED COMPONENTS TO THE GOH WITHOUT CHARGE, AND THE UNDERTAKING OF A PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN AT THE COMPANY'S EXPENSE.

5. IN MID-1973 THE GOH DEFINITELY BROKE OFF DISCUSSIONS WITH THE COMPANY AND PROVIDED THE EMBASSY WITH A COPY OF THE REPORT OF THE MEDICAL INQUIRY COMMISSION. IN GENERAL, THE REPORT FOUND THAT THE FIRM HAD REFUSED TO CONSIDER DONORS AS HUMAN BEINGS; HAD PHYSICALLY MISTREATED THEM; FAILED TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RPROVIDE HYGIENIC CONDITIONS OR SANITARY FACILITIES; TOOK BLOOD FROM UNDERNOURISHED PEOPLE; PROVIDED INADEQUATE EMERGENCY FACILITIES TO TREAT COMPLICATIONS; TOOK DOUBLE QUANTITIES OF BLOOD WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE OF DONORS; ESTABLISHED INADEQUATE PHYSICAL STANDARDS FOR DONORS, I.E., STANDARDS PERMITTED TAKING OF BLOOD FROM INDIVIDUALS SUFFERING FROM TYPHOID FEVER, HYPERTENSION, OR INCIPIENT HEART DIFFICULTIES; ETC.

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